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Finding a Middle Way to Develop Europe's Fisheries Dependent Areas: The Role of Fisheries Local Action Groups

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Abstract

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund is an important new opportunity for fishing communities which offers the prospect of integrating local territorial approaches and strategies to support the fishing sector. But what does it mean to find a 'middle way' where households, businesses and localities dependent on fishing are part of an integrated strategy for local territorial development? In this paper we review these models of development and draw on case study findings to discuss how Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) provide lessons for the future. The paper reveals a need for greater clarity regarding the intended beneficiaries and overarching novel purpose of Axis 4 and sets out an original typology of fisheries dependency to help guide local strategies. Looking beyond local impacts, the paper argues that the success of the initiative may be judged in terms of how far steering a middle course can contribute to the broader transformation of fisheries policy and to what extent FLAGs can play a role in evidencing the resilience and vulnerabilities of fishing communities.

1. Introduction

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) offers fishing communities the prospect of greater prominence being given to their social and economic circumstances through an integration of local territorial development approaches and strategies to support the fishing sector. The sector has undergone major structural and social changes, involving increasing rationalisation and concentration of fishing activity, which have had significant implications for fisheries dependent areas. A halving of EU fishing employment over the last 20 years, means fewer people able to pass on skills and knowledge, and the disruption of social networks and intergenerational continuity. There are growing difficulties in recruiting crews with young people often unwilling or unable to go into fishing and there is a need to restore confidence and pride within the sector (White, 2015). It is hard to deny that EU fisheries policy has failed communities socially. Social objectives have either been left to Member States to elaborate or handled as an externality of fisheries policy, to be dealt with through local development and cohesion strategy (Symes and Phillipson, 2009).

In fact, the European Commission has never been comfortable in its handling of socio-economic issues in fisheries. In the past funding was available for modernisation and renewal of the industry's physical capital (vessels, port infrastructure and processing plant), but little energy was expended on renewal of social capital (employment, skills and entrepreneurship). There was a brief flicker of interest in the 1990s, with the creation of a separate fund to support the industry (FIFG 1994-2006) and a dedicated, albeit short lived, initiative (PESCA 1994-99) focusing on community development and alternative employment opportunities outside fishing (Coffey, 2000). Collation of regional data on employment was also initiated in 1991 (see Salz, 1993), but this revealed low spatial concentrations of fishing related activity. Only 74 out of 289 coastal districts across the EU12 recorded greater than 5% dependence on fishing related employment. Real dependence occurred only at the level of the individual fishing community. No attempt was made to formalise the concept of fishing dependent areas as a framework for assisted development.

Fishing communities have therefore appeared less and less as spatial communities of common interest, but more as 'dispersed occupational communities' set in diverse local economies. When the idea of targeted assistance was revisited in 2007, it thus seemed more appropriate to consider the place of households, businesses and localities dependent on the sector as part of an integrated strategy for local territorial development. Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), set up through Axis 4 of the EFF in the image of Leader Local Action Groups (Ray, 2000), are positioned at the crux of this challenge, in activating local responses that build resilience and adaptability within the fisheries sector and the wider community (Davoudi, 2012; Symes *et al*., 2015).

In this paper we explore how Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) can provide important lessons for the future in achieving a balanced approach – a middle way - between sectoral and territorial development. The paper begins by reviewing models of fisheries development before providing a brief overview of Axis 4. This is followed by a case study of a UK FLAG which explores the early experiences of bridging sectoral and territorial development. It complements another paper in this issue of Sociologia Ruralis (Gilles van de Walle *et al*., 2015) which presents the case study of a more mature FLAG and its portfolio of funded projects to illustrate some of the potential benefits of the integrated fisheries development approach. Finally, we draw on the case study as well as insights from a suite of unpublished studies of FLAGs across the EU, to identify key issues facing the future development of a 'middle way' for fishing communities.

2. Models of fisheries development

2.1 The challenge of neo-endogenous fisheries development

Axis 4 is an example of how rural development in Europe (and indeed local development approaches more broadly) has been informed by a shift in overarching philosophy from exogenous to endogenous approaches. The classic formulation, prevalent in post-war Europe,

was an exogenous model ('driven from outside' the local community), which put industrialisation at the heart of development. The key principles of this model were economies of scale and concentration, forces which have certainly transformed fisheries. The focus of development was upon intensification, modernisation and specialisation within sectors, but also the encouragement of labour and capital mobility. It included inducements to farmers and fishers to leave their industries, technological development, improvements in infrastructure, and inducements to firms to relocate to rural areas (Lowe *et al*., 1998; Ward *et al*, 2005). The model has been predominant in fisheries, with the encouragement of sectoral development - emphasising the sector's sustainability, competitiveness and social renewal – regarded as the sole preserve of national or European fisheries policy and exogenous to the particular dynamics, contexts and influences of local territories.

By the early 1980s it was evident that the model had not worked (Ward *et al*., 2005). Exogenous development was seen as "*dependent development*, reliant on continued subsidies and the policy decisions of distant agencies" (Ward *et al*., 2005: p.4). It encouraged "*distorted development*, which boosted single sectors, selected settlements and certain types of business" (p.4), and was viewed as *destructive development* that "erased the cultural and environmental differences of rural areas" (p.4). Finally it was seen as *dictated development* devised by external experts and policy makers. Criticisms such as these chime all too well with the diagnoses of failure of fisheries policy – its command and control structure, remote decision making and science, insensitivity to spatial and local community effects, and its encouragement of structural and geographical concentration at the expense of small scale fisheries (Symes, 2014).

It therefore became clear that an alternative, more locally based approach was needed - one which has become embodied in programmes like Leader and now Axis 4 of the EFF. So-called endogenous approaches ('driven from within' the local community) are based on the assumption that the natural resources, people and culture of an area hold the key to its development. The principal driving force is local initiative and enterprise. Advocates of local territorial development typically associate a progressive vision for change with creating

119 resilience through diversification of 'new' rural economies (Baldock *et al*, 2001; OECD,
120 2006) or, in the terminology of resilience theory, their 'bounce forward' or adaptation away
121 from sector-focused development (Boschma and Matrin, 2007). From a local development
122 perspective, sectoral initiatives can often be construed as a conservative and backward step
123 that lock in dependency on residual industries facing decline.
124 To an extent, because of its position at the intersection of sector and territory, Axis 4
125 unsettles this account of the trajectory of development, from sectoral and exogenous
126 approaches to those that are territorial and endogenous. In aiming to bridge sectoral and
127 territorial approaches locally, the test facing FLAGs is to marry what continues to be a top-
128 down, exogenously driven sector, with a bottom-up endogenous approach to local
129 development. To do so they must become effective neo-endogenous intermediaries. 'Neo-
130 endogenous' (or 'networked') development (Lowe *et al*., 1995, 1998; Shucksmith 2000; Ray,
131 2001) acknowledges that the driving forces of local development emanate both from outside
132 and within localities, and that the dynamism of local economies therefore depends on their
133 ability to mobilise internal capacities and respond to external processes, resources, policies
134 and actions. Here, strategic extra-local connections of local businesses, households and
135 community groups are vital in positioning local economies politically and economically
136 (Ward *et al.,* 2005) and the "units of intervention switch from individual sectors and socio-
137 economic groups to territories of need and potential" (Lowe, 2006: p.9).
138
139 *2.2 Fisheries as a positive force for local development*
140
141 Axis 4 therefore provokes fisheries administrations, development agencies and local
142 communities alike to develop their respective cultures, relationships and expertise. Often for
143 the first time, fisheries interests and administrations need to think through territorial aspects.
144 Local development groups have to become more familiar with and aim to influence the
145 drivers, prospects and interests of the fisheries sector and the wider impacts of fisheries

policy. These actors must also overcome a prevailing narrative which suggests that the fishing sector is an industry in terminal decline.

Fisheries development is imbued by various meta-framings that become received wisdom, determining which courses of action are considered viable and which are to be discontinued. Fishing communities are often construed as under-developed and in need of diversification and modernisation, through transition funding that can transfer skills, assets and people out of the industry. Thus Gallizioli (2014) argues that the only remaining, truly fishing-dependent coastal municipalities are those in isolated, less developed areas that have been "unable to reconvert their economy" and which are subject to a "natural trend of economic development that promotes a shift towards secondary and tertiary sectors" (p. 68). He suggests that fishing-dependent communities in which "fishers are unable to find other professional occupations in the local area or alternative sources of income … face the risk of irreversible decline if they do not embark on diversification of their local labour markets" (pp. 72-73). Within the EFF, fishers and the fishing industry are therefore "no longer seen as drivers of economic development in a fisheries area" (p. 73).

Nielsen *et al.* (2014) call for a more critical look at these prevailing narratives, that are seemingly so unstoppable and inevitable. There are signs of counter-narratives emerging. Whilst primary sector employment has clearly declined and local coastal economies have become increasingly diverse in terms of their business base, significant employment does remain in the industry and fishing-based employment continues to make an important contribution to the economic and socio-cultural profile of certain coastal localities. The narratives of fishing communities themselves are also deeply enmeshed in a commitment to a future within the fishing industry and to sustaining its renewable resource (Ross, 2013).

Axis 4 therefore raises the question of whether fisheries, rather than simply being defined and managed as a national or European economic sector producing commodities for distant markets, can become re-integrated as a positive force for territorial development. A similar proposition has been made with respect to agriculture, as part of a long-run debate about the relationship between farming and rural development policy:

> "Agriculture was clearly once seen as a means to support rural areas. Conversely, some now promote rural policy as a means to support agriculture … while others see rural policy as a means to help rural areas overcome their dependence on a sector in decline" (Baldock *et al*. 2001: p. 17)

Efforts and arguments to reinvigorate and relocalise sustainable farming and land-based sectors within local economies and supply chains have much resonance for fisheries. Thus Ward *et al.* (2003, p.210) describe how "old style' agricultural and rural policy has viewed farming as a distinct and separate economic sector, set apart from local and regional economies". It is a necessity, they argue, that a territorial approach confronts this separate status and policy discourses built around individualised notions of agricultural competitiveness, that focus on a concern for the individual owner-occupier farmer detached from local social and economic networks and acting as a lone economic unit in the national and global marketplace.

But how should sectoral and territorial development trajectories be balanced and integrated? Should the emphasis be on fisheries initiatives, supporting the sector's competitiveness, sustainability and attracting new blood to the sector? Or should it be on the wider social and economic diversification of coastal economies and re-skilling of fishers out of the industry? Much depends on how the mission of Axis 4 is interpreted and whether it is primarily concerned with strengthening the local fisheries-based economy and its contribution, or with encouraging alternative forms of activity. Or is it a mix of all these objectives? These questions relate to a long-standing debate as to whether EFF (and therefore Axis 4) is an extension of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) or EU regional policy. Until now the criticism of the EFF has been that its criteria have rather more to do with regional convergence than with providing support for fulfilling the CFP objectives. Thus the CFP has evolved largely in isolation from fisheries structural funding, which has been expected to handle the social externalities of fisheries policy driven by biological and economic imperatives (Symes and Phillipson, 2009).

Symes (2005: p.4) therefore describes an intense debate surrounding the "choice of economic development strategies for fishing dependent areas, between those who favour continued direct support to the fishing industry and those who see the solution in terms of economic diversification". The former strategy is viewed high risk and as based on a mistaken belief "that one can turn back or at least tame the basic drivers of modernisation". The strategy is losing ground to arguments for widening the local employment base, but this avenue too can struggle to establish enterprises that "can take root in the relatively thin soils of many fishing dependent areas".

The choices between development trajectories can, in theory, be mutually supporting within a territorial development approach, with local development providing improved incomes, institutions and community services for fishing households, and therefore upholding fishing cultures and values, and a healthy fishing sector contributing to an area's economic vitality and its cultural and social foundations. In this vein Morgan *et al.* (2014) argue that diversification approaches are needed which complement and maintain a direct or indirect link to fishing, so that fishers can exploit their professional skills, knowledge and social networks gained through fishing. Symes (2005: p. 4) similarly posits that:

> "It is not a question of having to choose between one or other of these strategies. There has to be a middle way which balances the need to diversify the economies of Fishing Dependent Regions with strengthening the survival chances of fishing enterprises in some of the more remote Fishing Dependent Communities".

But what does it mean to find a 'middle way' where households, businesses and localities dependent on the sector are part of an integrated strategy for local territorial development? In the remainder of this paper we turn to this question and consider whether and how it is being realised in the context of Axis 4. How far, for example, are FLAGs focusing on employment, or on other community needs (housing, education, medical services etc)? How do they enable participation of fisheries and other stakeholders in the local community? And how far are

local FLAG strategies preoccupied with addressing more immediate needs (crisis response) or planning for long term, intergenerational and adaptable futures?

3. Axis 4 and Fisheries Local Action Groups

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (Council Reg 1198/2006 Article 4), which aims to 'encourage sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life in areas with activities in the fisheries sector', provided a fresh start for local development in fishing dependent areas. The EFF was established in 2007 and ran until the end of 2013. Following initial delays in the implementation of Axis 4, by early in 2014 over 300 FLAGs had been established across 21 of the 27 EU Member States, with each responsible for developing a locally-owned strategy tailored to the characteristics of local areas and fisheries. The area-based strategies are used to guide selection of local projects that aim to strengthen links between the fisheries sector and wider local community. Over 6200 projects have so far been initiated (November 2013), with the largest concentrations in Poland, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Finland, Sweden and France. Projects have focused on generating alternative or additional sources of income for fishermen and their families, "for instance to increase the value added of fisheries products, as well as from other sectors, as diverse as tourism, social services, arts and culture, renewable energies, information technologies or environmental stewardship" (Budzich-Tabor, 2014: p. 185).

FLAGs are diverse in terms of structure, levels of resources available and geographical scale. The relative spend on Axis 4 within the overall EFF budgets of Member States is also highly variable. Budzich-Tabor (2014) suggests that countries with strong fisheries sectors have tended to devote less attention to Axis 4 with its emphasis on creating jobs in communities that have been affected by loss of fisheries income and which can no longer rely primarily on the fishing sector, instead choosing to concentrate on the EFF's more sector-focused priorities. However, by applying an area-based approach within a sectoral policy, Axis 4 is regarded as an innovative solution that makes it possible to "develop activities that bring benefit both to the fishermen or their families and the wider community" (Budzich-

Tabor, 2014: p. 191). In practice experiences have differed considerably among FLAGs, in terms of the balance between a focus on the fisheries sector and wider territorial development, and it has sometimes been difficult to achieve genuine involvement from the sector and build trust between fisheries and non-fisheries partners (Budzich-Szukala, 2014).

In the next section of the paper, an insight into these issues is provided by a case study of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FLAG and its early stages of formation, drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with FLAG participants and other members of the local community and fishing industry. The FLAG was one of six designated in England in 2010 through a competitive process, based on the strength of proposed local development strategies, and sharing a total of £7.3 million of funding.

4. Case study: Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FLAG

4.1 Cornish context

Cornwall is located in the far south west peninsula of the UK. It has a population of just over half a million people. The county is a European Convergence area implying below average economic performance with access to ERDF and ESF funds, and was previously an Objective 5b (1994-1999) and Objective 1 (2000-2006) area. It has lower average earnings compared to the rest of the UK, relatively high unemployment, and a gradually increasing but ageing population given a combination of outflows of younger people in search of further education and employment, increasing life expectancy, and working age net migration (Cornwall Council, 2011). As a region it is relatively disadvantaged in terms of distance from major centres of industry and commerce. Though it has a diverse economy it is heavily reliant on tourism, a sector that has now replaced the historic mainstays of agriculture, fishing and mining.

Whilst there is significant local variation in economic circumstances and prospects across the region, according to the FLAG Delivery Plan, published in October 2011, coastal

communities that support fishing in Cornwall show relatively high levels of deprivation, a high proportion of inactive working age people and a low number of businesses per head. The FLAG Strategy describes one in three people in the county as being touched in some way by the fishing industry, whether it be through ancillary, processing and tourism activities or through living in a coastal location that supports fishing. The industry is presented as a key part of visitor perception and the tourism appeal of the Cornish coast (Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Fisheries Local Action Group, 2011).

Cornwall's fishing activity is dispersed among some 50 or so ports, harbours and small coves across its long indented coastline with Newlyn hosting the largest concentration and ranked as the UK's 8th largest port by volume of landings in 2010. With a fleet of 619 registered fishing vessels, of which almost 90% were under 10m in length, and 898 active fishermen of whom a quarter were part time, the sector is diverse and versatile. Fishing activity ranges from beam trawling, scallop dredging, drift netting and long lining, to hand lining, crab and lobster potting. There are two official markets at Newlyn and Looe, though landings at many of the smaller harbours are usually handled by travelling merchants for onward sale or sold direct to local outlets. A high proportion of the Cornish catch is exported to mainland Europe (mainly France and Spain) with little value added locally. Some development of domestic markets has taken place, including several added value initiatives (eg hand line caught mackerel, bass and pollack) as well as the supply of high quality fresh fish to high end restaurants in Cornwall and beyond.

4.2 FLAG purpose and delivery system (balancing exogenous and endogenous interests)

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO), an executive non-departmental public body responsible for marine planning and fisheries management, is the managing authority for Axis 4 in England. Its functions as the accountable body are shared with Cornwall Development Company (CDC), an arm's length economic development company of the local authority, which acts as signatory for the FLAG, a constituted 'not for profit' partnership. The FLAG

Board supports the development and carries out the selection of project applications with the help of a full time FLAG *animateur*.

The FLAG's Strategy and Delivery Plan were agreed early in 2012. As part of its preparations for developing the Strategy, an extensive consultation exercise was carried out with the fishing industry and local community interests, identifying concerns related to the lack of new entrants into the industry, the need to generate added value, and investment in harbour facilities, threats posed by new environmental designations in the seas surrounding Cornwall, and a call for improved fisheries management (Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Fisheries Local Action Group, 2011).

In terms of spatial extent, the FLAG covers the whole of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This reflects an established focus for organising EU funds, as well as the geographically dispersed nature of fishing activity and communities. The FLAG therefore has to maintain its profile and presence across a large area and ensure geographical balance in allocating projects. This can be difficult given the total budget available to the FLAG is modest (*circa* £1.5 million).

The formal aim of the FLAG is "to maximise the economic opportunities and benefits open to Cornish fishing communities in a sustainable and cooperative environment, which builds the capacity of those who live and work in them" (Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Fisheries Local Action Group, 2011: p.4) . Its strategic objectives were intentionally framed to be broad in scope, to allow maximum room for manoeuvre in potential project design and selection (Box 1). However emphasis is placed on the fisheries sector rather than territorial development per se, involving fishing communities in:

> "new market development; new cooperatives; IT to support operational efficiency and safety; the participation of women in initiatives to enhance the viability of the industry; trans-national projects; training and development; the attraction of new entrants to the profession; support for fishing festivals; the development of safe access to harbours; the provision of loan and business

support; the enhancement of water access for communities generally; participation in governance and environmental issues and projects which enable technical innovation" (p.4).

Box 1: FLAG strategic objectives

Building on previous collaboration and relationships developed in the context of earlier Objective 1 funding, the Strategy relies heavily on the kind of plans, projects and activities funded through the Objective 1 Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Fishing Industry Task Force Strategy 2000-2010.

By June 2013 there had been *circa* 130 enquiries from potential applicants and £750,000 had been committed to projects with an estimated overall spend of over £1.7 million. Key projects according to the FLAG include an initiative to help challenged young people build life capacity skills, and a project focused on the use of technology and Twitter to enable day boats to sell lobsters directly to a national market. In the harbour of Looe, a new community-fishing event space was also under development together with a 'disabled to sea' project. It is also clear that many of the enquiries that have come forward, for example relating to engine applications and crew safety work, have been more appropriate for, and channelled to, other axes of the EFF.

The FLAG Board is responsible for managing the local strategy and decisions on funding at the local level, turning to the CDC for support over eligibility of particular proposals (though it is the MMO that has final sign-off). With considerable previous experience from its involvement in the Objective 1 programme, the CDC is regarded as a 'safe pair of hands' capable of handling negotiations with EU and national institutions, establishing systems of project approval, monitoring and evaluation and ensuring appropriate partnership arrangements. It provides the basic administrative and secretarial functions for the FLAG.

FLAGs present something of a dilemma: Axis 4 is, in effect, a bottom-up initiative, set within a command and control system of governance. Locally the situation was affected by the UK Government's delayed engagement with Axis 4, and by the fact that overall

responsibility was vested in a comparatively new agency (MMO) with no direct experience of overseeing local community development. Implementation was compressed into a short time span, leaving little opportunity for the gestation of project proposals. However in Cornwall the process was expedited through the appointment of an *animateur* in 2012 to help applicants convert good ideas into sound applications.

4.3 Balancing sectoral and territorial interests

Striking a balance of representation of local fishing sector and territorial interests represents a formidable challenge for the FLAGs. This is especially so in Cornwall, where the sector is extremely diverse in its fishery interests and is geographically dispersed. Formally, the FLAG comprises a broad constituency of interests. 'Fisheries sector' representatives include the Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation, representatives from three port based fishermen's associations (chosen from over a dozen across Cornwall), a sector training organisation, and two harbour masters. In theory the fishing industry representatives should embrace both small and large scale fishing interests. The Cornish FPO, uniquely in the UK, includes a sizeable number of 10m and under vessels in its membership. Wider community interests include a range of public, private and third sector representatives. There is also an independent Chairman (the Chair and Chief Fishery Officer of the Cornish Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority), an independent Vice-Chairman (Chair of a Leader Local Action Group) and an Isles of Scilly Representative. Seventeen individuals make up the voting membership of the Board. The FLAG also invites 'advisers' to attend meetings, including representatives from the MMO, Natural England, specialists from the local authority, and representatives from the Cornwall or Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities. All Board members are intended to reflect a wider sector or community view rather than serving their own particular constituency.

This is a large and broad partnership, and participants recognise that building its relationships, social capital and sense of purpose will take time. The FLAG has been able to

build on a tradition of good coordination among organisations locally. A number of the key members of the FLAG have considerable experience of working together in the delivery of national and European funding programmes and delegated schemes for fisheries and community development, including Leader and Objective 1. However despite this, there is a sense that this is a novel constituency of interests, a 'new mix of people' that will take time to gel.

Interviews with fishing industry and community leaders in 2012 revealed a diversity of interpretation of the FLAG initiative. It was seen as "raising the wellbeing and self-esteem of fishing and associated coastal communities", a means of reconnecting the industry with the wider community and ending the isolation of fishing within the local economy. The FLAG was an opportunity "to put cash into fishing ports and coves but with a wider community benefit". Most recognised the FLAG as part of a long term process of local development.

In practice, there was a considerable uncertainty over how to negotiate the interface between sectoral and territorial development and what constituted legitimate grounds for project funding. There were, for example, divergent views over whether Axis 4 should fund community development projects with little or no line of sight back to fishing sector interests. Some felt such an approach would further marginalise the sector, reinforcing its decline and risking the legitimacy of Axis 4 with the industry. While acknowledging that non-fishing representation on the FLAG was useful in "putting proposals into context", they argued that there had to be a clear fisheries link and benefit.

By contrast, others felt Axis 4 funding was not all about fisheries but the community more generally with broadly based development projects benefitting the whole local population, including fishers and their households. They believed the fisheries sector had been too prominent in early meetings and was, if anything, overrepresented in the composition of the board. With the FLAG "keen to get money out of the door quickly", funding good community projects that improve quality of life and employment prospects – whatever their focus – was paramount. But for some the innovatory nature of the scheme lay precisely in exploiting mutual opportunities at the interface between sector and community and called for

425 imaginative thinking and more broadly based partnerships. Focusing initially on projects of
426 this kind, generating perhaps a snowball effect, was key to reaching Axis 4's goals.
427 One way in which the balance of territorial and sectoral priorities is managed is through
428 the matching of EFF Axis 4 funding with other territorial development programmes. The
429 FLAG staff actively sought to combine FLAG funding alongside other funding streams - the
430 FLAG is described locally as a 'bridge to other funds', with the *animateur* playing a key role
431 in spotting opportunities for leveraging funding from different sources. FLAG Board
432 members and staff have good links to officers and partnerships for various funding streams,
433 including the region's four Leader LAGs.
434 The process of putting together the FLAG Strategy itself involved a judgement over
435 progress, parameters and relationships to other funds already available for wider community
436 development. This is reflected in the focus on the fisheries sector in the strategic objectives
437 and, through that, the fishing community. The Delivery Plan describes potential support for
438 tourism initiatives, but qualifies this as "especially those projects involving fishermen, the
439 preservation of the cultural heritage of fishing villages and the associated cultural tourism".
440 One of the views to emerge from the consultation exercise in preparing the FLAG Strategy
441 was that it should recognise the need for assistance to maximise the sector's "links to and
442 influences on other sectors". This is implicit in the intention "to make a significant fisheries-
443 related contribution to broader activities around: transport, fabric of fishing villages, health
444 and well-being and the impact of public sector job cuts where they have impact on fishing
445 communities".
446
447 **5. Defining the pathways**
448 Analysis of the early stages of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FLAG, the experience of Pays
449 d'Auray FLAG in this issue (Van de Walle, 2015), along with other unpublished studies of
450 FLAGs across the EU[1], suggest the need for a somewhat clearer specification of the targets

[1] As well as Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FLAG, England, case studies undertaken by the European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET) included: Lake Peipsi, Estonia; Pays d'Auray, France (see Van de

451 for Axis 4 funding to guide local strategies, investment choices and engagement of the
452 fisheries sector and wider community. In Figure 1, using notions of absolute and relative
453 fisheries dependency (based on simple economic variables) we illustrate how the nature of the
454 fishing industry can be contextualised in relation to local economies. From this one can begin
455 to identify potential vulnerabilities, sources of resilience, strategies for building local capacity
456 and the economic and social contribution that fisheries can make to local development.
457
458 *Figure 1: Typology of fisheries dependency*
459
460
461 Such an analysis could provide a firmer basis from which to plan investment, either within
462 the local areas and strategies of individual FLAGs (with a FLAG area potentially featuring in
463 one or more quadrants depending on its geographical extent and the diversity of local
464 contexts), or across fisheries development programmes more broadly. The temptation, in
465 demonstrating efficient targeting and use of limited resources, might be to focus investment in
466 areas with high absolute concentrations of activity and wealth creation within the fishing
467 industry (the top left and right segments of Figure 1). Alternatively, the balance of
468 investment in fisheries development could be weighted towards places that harbour smaller
469 shares of the national fishing industry but demonstrate high relative levels of fisheries
470 dependency (bottom right of Figure 1). This is likely to include those less well developed
471 'rural' economies with fewer major industrial activities in which fishing is locally important
472 but dependent mainly on small scale enterprises. Here the modest funding available to FLAGs
473 is attracting the greatest interest among potential beneficiaries and is likely to have the
474 greatest impact not only on the fisheries sector but the local economy more generally.
475 Establishing effective governance approaches that involve fisheries and other stakeholders
476 from the "far from homogenous" local community is vital for success and local legitimacy if

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Walle, 2015); FiskeriLAG Nord, Denmark; Cornwall, France; Peniche FLAG Oeste, Portugal; Aktion Österbotten, Finland; Fisterra-Ria de Muros-Noia, Spain; and Cadiz Estrecho, Spain. Some of the cases are introduced in FARNET (2013).

the FLAGs are not simply to reinforce existing power relations and inequalities (Shucksmith, 2000: p.208). However, securing an inclusive participation of the fisheries sector in local development initiatives can prove difficult. The industry's internal differentiation across both harvesting and distribution and between ports, *métiers*, scales of operation and social organisation is well demonstrated in the Cornish example and across EU FLAGs. Reflecting such diversity within local management organisations is a constant challenge. Despite attempts to ensure a broadly based representation, there are likely to be unresolved problems particularly around the involvement of small scale enterprises that tend to be least well organised, most marginal in terms of political influence and the hardest to reach group in terms of development initiatives. The demands of running small, independent businesses, combined with an increasing range of organisations concerned with managing local fisheries and the governance of local communities, risk dissipating the energies of the relatively limited number of willing representatives from the self-employed sectors of the industry.

Representation on FLAGs reflects, in part, the institutionalised structures and dynamics of the industry in individual member states. Where FLAGs are set in contexts of capable, sufficiently resourced and representative local organisations, recruitment may appear relatively straight forward. However, the simple solution of relying on the officers of recognised local organisations to represent their members will limit the range of opinions and make it less likely that the underlying rich diversity of local interests will be fully articulated. In some instances it may require a conscious effort on the part of the FLAG board to help the small boat sector to organise itself collectively and to provide a clear, transparent delineation of the FLAG's target beneficiaries instead of an unreconstructed statement of the sector's conventional interests.

6. Next steps

Axis 4 is a 'work in progress'. Our paper cannot hope to provide an overall assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Nor can it begin to fully describe how the approach is being interpreted in different local settings and filtered through different institutional contexts throughout Europe. It is too soon to calculate the added value locally, determine the effectiveness and durability of partnerships intended to generate synergies across fisheries and the wider business community or measure the degree of complementarity with other local development initiatives. These are tasks for future research.

However our analysis has provided early insight into the processes involved in establishing FLAG partnerships tasked with defining a role at the interface between sectoral and territorial development. On the surface many of the processes may appear familiar to those responsible for establishing local community-based development initiatives. As with Leader Local Action Groups, Axis 4 FLAGs are set within national institutional frameworks that have differing capacities and traditions of devolved management. They too are tasked with developing accountable decision-making processes, inclusive partnership working and robust means for demonstrating their impacts.

But the paper has also served to highlight matters arising from the novel focus of Axis 4. This includes a need for greater clarity in its overarching purpose and intended beneficiaries among the principal players, including its novel possibilities for bridging sectoral and wider community interests. Here there is an ongoing requirement for institutional development and capacity building. As the Leader experience has shown, forging local community partnerships and demonstrating tangible benefits takes time, and FLAGs are only at the outset of establishing wholly new constituencies of interests.

There is the potential to build on the foundation of new relationships currently being developed within Europe's FLAGs. Furthermore, looking ahead to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (2014-2020), there may be further opportunity to innovate at the territorial and sectoral development interface. Though there may also be attendant threats of dilution or marginalisation of local fisheries needs through a shift in focus onto blue growth, wider coastal development, and plans for closer coordination of EU community-led development

funding. Embedded in this question of future focus are fundamental considerations concerning why we want to sustain fishing communities (rather than simply 'coastal communities') in the first place, linked to the intrinsic values attached to fishing, the role these play in social renewal and individual and collective identities, and the specific skill base and resources of local ecological knowledge that cannot easily be replicated.

Looking beyond local impacts in rebuilding the resilience of fisheries and local communities, the success of Axis 4 may also be judged in terms of how far steering a middle course between sectoral and territorial approaches can contribute to the transformation of fisheries policy and especially the delegation of responsibilities to regional and local levels. There is a danger that Axis 4 comes to be seen by policy makers as the place where they handle the social sustainability of fishing and fishing communities and that is where their responsibility ends, perpetuating the status quo whereby socio-economic issues are dealt with late in the policy process as side effects of policy decisions. To date there is little evidence of FLAGs playing a role in higher level fisheries governance at EU or Member State level. However, FLAGs may eventually have an important role to play in providing evidence of the resilience and vulnerabilities of fishing communities and in collectively campaigning at local and national levels, so that the wider economic and social benefits of sustainable fisheries are given due consideration at early stages of policy formulation.

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Box 1: FLAG strategic objectives

1. **Developing sustainable supply chains and market development** - covering improving access to retail; providing 'step up' facilities; branding and marketing; promotion of under utilised species; selling direct; and accreditation. For example, the Delivery Plan envisages 2 new retail premises; the engagement of 10 fishermen in selling directly to 25 local and national restaurants and the wider food chain; and involving 25 fishermen in the branding and marketing of Cornwall's fish, including developing three sub-regional brands.
2. **Providing infrastructure and communal facilities for fishing communities and cooperatives** – relating to co-operative equipment; adaptation of business units and IT infrastructure. via development of two IT initiatives to enhance the operation, safety and sustainability of fishing, supporting 50 fishermen.
3. **Capacity building, cooperative development and networking** - covering know how and support for the creation of co-operatives; pump prime funding for co-operatives; support for family members and other wider contributors; trans national projects; and support for dissemination. via a target to support 25 family members, fisherman's wives and members of the wider fishing community, and to involve 30 people in visiting three trans-national or UK fisheries areas on study visits, to gain knowledge, learn about mentoring and inspire innovation.
4. **Training, retention and recruitment including diversification** – relating to training programmes / access to training; and targeting recruitment & promotion amongst young people. via training programmes to assist 50 fishermen, underpin recruitment and retention into the fishing sector and support training and engagement of 6 young people in fishing as a career, and for those involved in associated sectors and industry that rely on or are linked to the fishing sector.
5. **Coastal communities, tourism and economic development** - concerning heritage and interpretation; fish festivals and tourism; access to harbours and quays; support for fishing business with a tourism component; and access to water for everyone. via support for a heritage and interpretation project to promote public understanding and engagement in the fishing industry; and the development of fish festivals and wider tourism promotion opportunities around fishing.
6. **Advocacy and engagement for fishermen** - this includes support for an on ground *animateur*; and advocacy for the fishing community to enable eight fishing communities to be effectively represented and heard in the context of governance and environmental issues.
7. **Regional sustainable management engagement** – covering promotion of sustainable fishing techniques; support for dissemination of good practise on sustainability; and collaboration between science and fishing industry. via projects to support promotion of sustainable fishing techniques and innovation.

662 *Figure 1: Typology of fisheries dependency*
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